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ABSTRACT

All United States academic members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) were surveyed to determine (1) how many hours a week librarians were expected to devote to their primary assignment, (2) how many months a year they worked compared to most other faculty members on their campus, (3) whether research and scholarship were requirements for promotion and tenure, and (4) whether the library granted its professionals released time for research. Eighty percent of those questioned responded: fifty-one percent (35) of the libraries offer faculty status for librarians. Although most libraries incorporate evidence of research into their promotion and tenure requirements, very few make released time available on a regular basis. An examination of the promotion and tenure documents of these libraries revealed that, although criteria used to evaluate librarians resemble those used for their teaching colleagues, their work week requirements and the length of their yearly contracts differ significantly. A summary of the responses to the questionnaire used in the study is included with the report. (Author/JD)

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FACULTY STATUS, RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS
AND RELEASED TIME

by

Jack E. Pontius

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Faculty Status, Research Requirements, and Released Time

Abstract

The authors undertook to determine whether some sort of released time is granted to librarians who have faculty status and are expected to conduct research as part of their promotion and tenure requirements. The results indicate that although most libraries incorporate evidence of research into their promotion and tenure requirements, very few make released time available on a regular basis. An examination of the promotion and tenure documents of these libraries also reveals that although the criteria used to evaluate librarians resemble those used for their teaching colleagues, their work week requirements and the length of their yearly contracts differ significantly.

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Twelve years ago Jesse and Mitchell surveyed the opportunities provided to professional librarians who desired to pursue further study or conduct academic research projects.¹ Although the results revealed a great variety of attitudes and policies concerning these opportunities, the study also indicated that in many libraries, the question of research had not come up at all.² The authors concluded that only a limited amount of research had been produced by academic librarians and that "apathetic librarians must share the responsibility with reluctant administrators."³

University librarians with faculty status face a different and growing problem on many campuses today. Having gained faculty status, for the most part during the last few decades, librarians have until recently enjoyed a separate-but-equal status with respect to publication activity at many universities. Lately, however, there seems to be a subtle shift in attitude concerning the promotion and tenure criteria for librarians.⁴ Whether it be due to a saturated market for academic librarians, retrenchment at many universities, or some other reason, more seems to be expected of academic librarians now than, say, ten years ago--more publications, more degrees, more conferences attended, more academic committee work, among other requirements.

While most academic librarians gain credit for promotion and tenure by publishing and earning additional degrees, many librarians are now required to engage in these activities if they desire advancement or job security.⁵ Accordingly, the authors set out to discover whether these librarians are given

the time during the course of their regular work-day to pursue these activities, as is the case with many of their teaching colleagues.

That the Pennsylvania State University librarians find it difficult to engage in such pursuits in addition to their regular assignments can be documented in the history that follows:

On January 7, 1967, the Board of Trustees of The Pennsylvania State University granted librarians faculty status. The library faculty subsequently established internal criteria for promotion and tenure in accordance with procedures followed by other academic units. As with other academic deans, promotion and tenure decisions rested with the Dean of Libraries who received recommendations from the Library's Promotion and Tenure Committee, the members of which he appointed.

On August 31, 1976, the President of The Pennsylvania State University issued Revised Administrative Guidelines for the Conduct of the University Promotion and Tenure Review Process.⁶ These guidelines established a University-wide committee to review all candidates for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, Professor, and equivalent ranks. The new promotion and tenure guidelines listed four criteria for evaluations: teaching ability and effectiveness; research competence; scholarship and mastery of subject matter; and service to the University and the public.

These criteria seemed better suited to members of the teaching faculty than to members of the library faculty. When the Guidelines were promulgated, few librarians were either qualified or had the opportunity to undertake formal credit instruction. As for research, most members of the library faculty, worked a minimum of forty hours per week, eleven months a year at their primary assignments. In most cases they had neither the time, the opportunity, nor the same kind of academic preparation to conduct significant research.

Subsequently, the librarians at Penn State designed an internal document

that attempted to translate the four criteria into terms better suited to their professional assignment, and they added a fifth: librarianship ability and effectiveness. Because teaching and research remained factors in the evaluation process, however, librarians continued to express concern about fulfilling the promotion and tenure criteria, especially since a number of their colleagues had been denied tenure over the past few years.

Finally, in 1977, the Library Faculty Organization asked its Faculty Affairs Committee to pursue the subject of released time for research.⁷ The Committee, in turn, decided to investigate whether other university librarians in academic libraries of comparable size to Penn State's were encountering similar difficulties. It designed a questionnaire which it sent to all United States academic members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The questionnaire addressed one central issue: whether some sort of released time was granted to those librarians who were expected to conduct research as part of their promotion and tenure requirements. (For results of questionnaire see appendix.)

In particular, the Committee attempted to discover (1) how many hours a week librarians were expected to devote to their primary assignment, (2) how many months a year they worked compared to most other faculty members on their campus, (3) whether research and scholarship were requirements for promotion and tenure, and (4) whether the library granted its professionals released time for research. In addition to completing the questionnaire, the responding libraries were asked to send copies of any documents that reflected their current criteria for promotion and tenure, or any other documents that related to released time.

Eighty percent (69) of those questioned responded; fifty-one percent (35) had faculty status. Similarities with Penn State's situation abounded. Most universities whose librarians enjoyed faculty status had achieved it in the

last two decades. The great majority of U.S. ARL academic librarians work on twelve-month contracts (with one month vacations), while most of their teaching colleagues work on nine-month contracts. Librarians with faculty status average a 38.6-hour week.

Also, among those with faculty status, ninety-four percent (31) of the libraries incorporate evidence of research and publication into their promotion and tenure requirements. But only nine percent (3) answered that they provide released time on a regular basis.⁸ This situation is partially mitigated by the fact that only thirty-five percent (10) answered no to the question "Is it possible for librarians to gain promotion and tenure without evidence of research and publication?"

PROMOTION AND TENURE DOCUMENTS

Twenty-eight libraries with faculty status forwarded copies of the documents that reflected their current promotion and tenure criteria. A thorough examination of these documents revealed a number of interesting points.

Most promotion and tenure documents list research as one of the criteria for promotion and tenure. As would be expected, the quality of the research tends to be emphasized more strongly as a librarian approaches promotion to the higher ranks. But the language used to establish the criteria of quality is often inexplicit. For example, promotion to associate requires "significant" contributions; promotion to librarian requires "outstanding" contributions; and promotion to the assistant librarian level requires merely "potential."

Some of the promotion and tenure documents attempt to define what, for librarians, constitutes research. In addition to such generally expected items as book reviews, bibliographies, and articles, one library added "the development of new procedures and programs." Following the same vague line, another library suggests that many of the achievements of librarians will be

the result of "the practical application of the principles of librarianship and a creative approach to the solution of the problems confronted in serving the needs of the university community."

Only a few of the documents mentioned how the librarians' typical work schedule might place constraints on their ability to produce significant research. One library director pointed out that the librarian-student ratio at his university is 1:525, making excellent library service more of a priority than the need for librarians to conduct research. One document states that the library faculty "by the nature of their professional assignment, are expected to be involved, a maximum amount of the time, with the teaching function (i.e., librarianship), which, in the library, requires a much higher percentage of actual contact hours than does classroom instruction."

All libraries look favorably on extra coursework or on additional degrees for promotion and tenure. Some libraries substitute extra degrees for years of experience; one library bases an elaborate formula on years of experience or additional education to determine eligibility for promotion. At least two libraries require added degrees for promotion to associate or full librarian. For example, the University of Utah requires an MLS and a second masters degree for promotion to assistant or associate librarian; the aspiring full librarian at Utah must now have a doctorate. While the research requirement does not seem to be a major problem at the University of Hawaii, librarians consider the minimum degree requirement to be a hurdle since a doctorate is mandatory for promotion to associate librarian and professorial ranks. (This requirement was being reconsidered at the time the questionnaire was circulating.)

Many libraries substitute "librarianship" for the regular faculty's teaching requirement.⁹ The librarianship-teaching equivalence is expressed in various ways. Teaching is defined (for example) as "developing the

intellectual resources of the university libraries," "effectiveness and worth as a librarian," "excellence of performance," or "those duties and activities necessary to carry out the function of one's appointed position."¹⁰ In addition, one library equates teaching to in-house seminars and orientation programs.

In many cases, libraries have formulated internal promotion and tenure documents by translating the university requirements into terms more appropriate to the professional assignments of the library faculty. In some cases, the faculty handbook itself stresses the unique contribution of librarians as faculty members. For example, a library policy at Rutgers University states that "Librarians, because of their specialized role in the academic community, are members of a distinct but integral division within the university. Their functions differ in part from those of the teaching and research faculties; therefore, librarians must be subject to standards governing appointment and promotion that reflect their identity."¹¹

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In a recent article on the changing identity of academic librarianship, William Axford states that for many librarians with faculty status "the faculty club no longer looks quite so attractive, now that the dues are higher."¹² He continues by saying that librarians are becoming more hesitant about full faculty status as the university increasingly insists that librarians both do their jobs well and demonstrate a continued interest in scholarship, research, and publication.

The major finding of the questionnaire on released time reveals that although the dues are indeed escalating, the opportunities to succeed are not keeping pace. The author of another study investigating the publication activity of librarians and teaching faculty corroborates this conclusion and states "that librarians with faculty status are likely to suffer where promotion and tenure decisions concerning them are subjected to the same review procedures

used to evaluate the teaching faculty."¹³ In fact, librarians who do their jobs well may have little time for anything else. This impression has, however, flourished for some time. As one astute administrator wrote ten years ago, "There is a conflict, possibly inevitable, between the spirit of scholarship and the elements of library schedules.... Library policy needs to seek ways of resolving this conflict, if only partially.... In particular, they should avoid being caught up in the 'publish or perish' problem."¹⁴

Unfortunately, the publish-or-perish problem seems to have descended upon many academic librarians, but the forces that have brought about this condition are not easy to identify. Although some feel that it is the result of the "academy's insistence," the Penn State experience does not necessarily confirm this impression. One University administrator, meeting with the Library's Faculty Affairs Committee, suggested that the University does not have a clear idea of what librarians do, and has, therefore, accepted the librarians' evaluation of themselves for purposes of promotion and tenure.

What, then, are a librarian's alternatives? Axford offers three solutions to the problem: "One would be to muster the discipline necessary to accept the values of the academy and work individually and organizationally to meet them. A second would be to admit honestly that there is nothing dishonorable in viewing librarianship as a highly skilled vocation rather than a profession, and being content with the consequences--civil service status or something equivalent. A third route would be to attempt to establish some kind of quasi-professional category between civil service and faculty status."¹⁵

With respect to option number three, the authors note that subsequent to distributing the questionnaire on released time, the Faculty Affairs Committee surveyed the librarians at Penn State and found, among other things, that more than fifty percent expressed interest in having the Faculty Affairs Committee pursue alternate status for librarians on campus.

Are there other options? Recalling that librarians have little time to do anything else if they perform their assigned work efficiently, perhaps they should consider performing it less efficiently. Despite its apparent irreverence, decreased efficiency is one consequence that many teaching faculties have, themselves, experienced. If most academic librarians gradually curtailed their performance of library services, more time for research would certainly result.

There is another option, and some libraries have already chosen it. It springs from the notion that the faculty is a heterogeneous group composed of teachers, administrators, researchers, and librarians. Why should any one of these be judged by the standards of another? Librarians can, themselves, develop alternative promotion and tenure models both appropriate to professional library work and conducive to a satisfactory rate of advancement. Though an integral part of the teaching process, librarians maintain an identity quite apart from other faculty members. Their promotion and tenure criteria should, therefore, reflect their unique identity in specific, objective, measurable terms. Implementing alternative promotion and tenure models can help librarians maintain their identity and accomplish at the university what they have been trained to do.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE ON RELEASED TIME

1. Do librarians have faculty status?

69 responses.

34 no. One library indicated that its librarians are actively seeking faculty status.

35 yes. Four libraries do not include tenure. Two libraries are currently reviewing their faculty status.

1a. If yes, what year did it become effective?

31 responses.

1 - 1920's (3%)
1 - 1930's (3%)
5 - 1940's (16%)
3 - 1950's (9%)
18 - 1960's (58%)
2 - 1970's (6%)

None reported receiving faculty status after 1970.

2. How many librarians are on your staff?

63 responses.

<u>33--With Faculty Status</u>	<u>30--Without Faculty Status</u>
Average number of librarians in libraries that offer faculty status	58
Average number of librarians in libraries that do not offer faculty status	68
Average number of librarians in all 63 libraries	63

3. What type of contract do most librarians have on your campus?

(12 months, 46 weeks, etc.)

63 responses.

33--With Faculty Status

12-month--31

10.5-month--1

9-month--1

30--Without Faculty Status

12-month--30

Those with the 10.5- and 9-month contracts do not receive vacation time.

4. What type of contract do most other faculty members have on your campus?

63 responses.

33--With Faculty Status

10- to 12-month--1

10-month--3

9- and 12-month--2

9-month--26

academic year--1

30--Without Faculty Status

9- or 12-month--1

10-month--2

9-month--27

5. Are all librarians offered a choice of contract?

65 responses.

34--With Faculty Status

1 offered choice of

contract

31--Without Faculty Status

0 offered choice of

contract

A number of libraries offered a choice of contract in exceptional basis-
for example, for reasons of health.

6. What is the minimum number of hours a librarian is expected to work each week (the regular work week)?

63 responses.

33--With Faculty Status

average--38.6

30--Without Faculty Status

average--37.9

This question produced a number of diverse responses, for example, one respondent said "50," and four said "no minimum."

7. How many hours is your main library open per week?

64 responses.

33--With Faculty Status

98.8 average

31--Without Faculty Status

96 average

8. How many vacation days do librarians receive per year?

66 responses.

34--With Faculty Status

48 days--1

27 days--1

25 days--2

24 days--5

23 days--1

22.5 days--1

22 days--9

21.75 days--1

21 days--7

20 days--2

15 days--1

32--Without Faculty Status

6 weeks--1

1 month--1

from 23 to 28 days--1

24 days--6

23 days--3

22 days--16

21 days--1

20 days--3

8. Continued

34--With Faculty Status

from 22 to 32 days--1 (Vacations are given according to rank and length of service.)

0 days--2 (These librarians have the 10.5- and 9-month contracts.)

Although the authors asked for vacation days specifically, the suspicion persists that some respondents included days the library was closed, such as between terms and holidays along with vacation days.

9. Do you use "floating" or substitute librarians to cover when librarians are absent because of research, vacation, or meetings?

66 responses.

34--With Faculty Status

No--30

Yes--2

Occasionally--2

32--Without Faculty Status

No--25

Yes--3

Occasionally--4

10. Is evidence of research and publication part of the criteria used to evaluate librarians for promotion and tenure?

59 responses.

33--With Faculty Status

Yes--32 (97%)

No--1 (3%)

26--Without Faculty Status

Yes--20 (76%)

No--6 (24%)

11. Is it possible for librarians to gain promotion and tenure without evidence of research and publication?

50 responses.

29--With Faculty Status

Yes--19 (65%)

No--10 (35%)

21--Without Faculty Status

Yes--19 (90%)

No-- 2 (10%)

12. What part does research play in the evaluation for promotion and tenure
(What %)?

7 responses.

7--With Faculty Status

- 10--1 (20%)
- 3 (20%)
- 2 (30%)
- 1 (40%)

13. Is released time for research allotted on a regular basis?

64 responses.

33--With Faculty Status

- Yes--3 (9%)*
- No--30 (91%)

31--Without Faculty Status

- Yes--3 (7.7%)
- No--28 (92.3%)

14. If released time is allotted, how is it granted--automatically or on
application?

27 responses.

- 2 granted it automatically
- 25 granted it on application

14a. If by application, is there a written library policy or application form?

Eleven of the 25 had written policies or request forms for released time.

15. If time is allotted, are librarians held accountable for it?

31 responses.

18--With Faculty Status

- Yes--12
- No--6

13--Without Faculty Status

- Yes--7
- No--6

* The three were Ohio State University, the University of Hawaii, and Texas
A & M. The University of Illinois is currently working on a recommendation
for 9 hours a week for research.

15. Continued.

The type of accountability varied: Some had to present reports within a given period; others had to present reports without deadlines; some were reviewed through peer review; and others were accountable for their research at the time of their annual review.

16. Does the released time discussed here include attendance at conferences, internal committee meetings, attending classes, etc.; or are these activities separately allotted?

46 responses.

23--With Faculty Status

Separately allotted--20

Included--2

Both--1

23--Without Faculty Status

Separately allotted--22

Included--1

FOOTNOTES

1. William H. Jesse and Ann E. Mitchell, "Professional Staff Opportunities for Study and Research, "College and Research Libraries 29, no.2 (March, 1968): 87-100.
2. Ibid., p.90.
3. Ibid., p.90.
4. This feeling emerged from the authors' own experience at The Pennsylvania State University from discussions with colleagues at various library association meetings, and from published job descriptions.
5. See Summary of Questionnaire on Released Time, Question 11.
6. The Pennsylvania State University, 1976-77 Revised Administrative Guidelines for the Conduct of the University Promotion and Tenure Review Process, University Park, 31 August, 1976.
7. The members included Allen Cohen (Chairperson), Margaret Deitzer, Ronald Filippelli, Paul Gherman, Cornelius McKown, Murray Martin, Jack Pontius, Cordelia Swinton, Frederick Van Antwerp, and Muriel Zeldis.
8. Ohio State University allows eight hours a week. Texas A&M allows four hours a week. The University of Hawaii reported no figures.
9. Librarianship is the ability to collect, preserve, use, and transmit information and knowledge. It is the ability to conduct the programs, activities, and services which are devised to carry out these tasks. This definition is based on one by Jean Key Gates in Introduction to Librarianship, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1976. p.3-4.
10. The University of Minnesota, the State University of New York at Albany, Purdue University and Ohio State University.
11. Rutgers University Library, "University Library Policy with respect to Appointment and Promotion of Library Faculty," New Brunswick, 15 June 1963: 1.

12. H. William Axford, et al., "The Three Faces of Eve: or the Identity of Academic Librarianship," Journal of Academic Librarianship 2, no.6 (1977): 382.
13. Paula De Simone Watson, "Publication Activity Among Academic Librarians," College and Research Libraries 38, no.5 (September 1977): 382.
14. Jesse and Mitchell, "Professional Staff Opportunities," p.97.
15. Axford, et al., "The Three Faces of Eve," p.277.